

*War Veterans' Allowances*

## WAR VETERANS' ALLOWANCES

EXTENSION OF ALLOWANCES TO INCLUDE CERTAIN  
OTHER CLASSES—ENLARGEMENT OF  
MEMBERSHIP OF BOARD

Hon. C. G. POWER (Minister of Pensions and National Health) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following proposed resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the War Veterans' Allowance Act so as to extend the allowance payable thereunder to a class of veterans of the great war not presently the recipients of such allowances who, because of tangible or intangible disabilities and handicaps, are incapable of maintaining themselves; to include certain veterans of the South African war; to include among the classes of moneys non-deductible from allowance, pensions or grants accompanying certain military decorations; to provide for the avoidance of over-lapping of benefits payable under the War Veterans' Allowance Act and those payable under the Old Age Pension Act, and to enlarge the membership of the war veterans' allowances board.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Johnston (Lake Centre) in the chair.

Mr. POWER: It will be remembered that the War Veterans' Allowance Act was passed in 1930 to provide for the maintenance of veterans who are in necessity and because of age or incapacity were unable to provide for themselves. It was based on the assumption that the people of this country do not want to see its veterans in the bread-line or suffering hardship from lack of the necessities of life when they become too old or too disabled to work, even though their disabilities could not be proved to be a result of war service and consequently are not pensionable.

The act provided for a maximum allowance to a married veteran of \$40 a month, provided he had reached the age of sixty or was so disabled as to be "permanently unemployable." In addition to this \$40 per month, he could earn or receive from other sources \$20 per month, giving him a total income of \$60 a month. With the single veteran, the amounts were half the sums named. Since the act was based on the assumption that the terrific strain on those in battle during the last war would pre-age the veteran as compared with the civilian, the act provided that the veteran must have served in a theatre of actual war. It provided however that those who received small pensions, no matter where they served, would also be entitled to its benefits. It also provided that those who served in His Majesty's imperial forces and in the forces of His Majesty's allies should receive the same benefits provided they were domiciled in Canada when they enlisted.

[Mr. Gardiner.]

The government at the time this act was enacted in 1930 knew that the cost of legislation would increase as years went by. As a matter of fact the cost in 1930 was \$318,000, and during the last fiscal year it was \$3,178,000. It will continue to increase for almost another twenty years. The expenditure at its peak in about the year 1957 is expected to reach twelve to thirteen million dollars and will look after approximately 35,000 to 40,000 veterans. At the present time 12,800 veterans are in receipt of the allowance and \$4,500,000 will be required to make provision for the recipients under this act during the next fiscal year, although a supplementary vote will be asked for to cover those it is proposed to bring under this amendment.

It has been stated that the legislation was originally enacted to provide for the veteran of sixty and the veteran who was "permanently unemployable." "Permanently unemployable" has, broadly speaking, been interpreted to mean totally incapacitated. After the act had been functioning for six years it became apparent that there was another class of veteran for whom the act did not provide but who was incapable of maintaining himself. For the main part it was found that this veteran was in his late fifties; he had not quite reached the age of sixty, and he did not have sufficient disability to classify him "permanently unemployable." Yet he was physically older than his years, and because of his pre-aging found it difficult to secure employment. The act was therefore amended in 1936, bringing in a third and additional class. The amendment provided for the man who, "having served in a theatre of actual war, has attained the age of fifty-five years and is in the opinion of the board incapable of maintaining himself because of disability, pre-aging and general unfitness." Over 1,100 veterans have been granted the allowance as the result of this amendment of 1936.

It is now proposed by this legislation to broaden the act still further, so as to enable the board administering it to provide for any veteran, regardless of his age, who cannot maintain himself because of industrial as well as physical incapacity or inadequacy. I refer to the veteran who is only partially disabled but whose tangible or intangible disability, combined with certain economic or industrial handicaps, such as having been unemployed for a long time, render it extremely unlikely that he will be able to maintain himself again.

The amendment will empower the board to award the allowance to any veteran, having